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ABSTRACT

This report describes results from the 1995 Utah Youth Risk Behavior Survey of Utah's high school students and compares results to selected 1991 and 1993 results. The 76-item survey was identical to the national survey, though it omitted questions about sexual behavior. It examined unintentional and intentional injuries; tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use; risky dietary behaviors; and physical inactivity. In 1995, the survey was administered to 3,291 students in grades 9-12 in 40 public schools. Results indicate that by the time students entered 9th grade, many had engaged in behaviors that put them at risk for the significant health and social problems of youth and childhood. Many Utah students continued to engage in health risk behaviors throughout their high school years. Overall, there were few statistically significant increases or decreases from year to year in percentages of students engaging in health risk behaviors. Too few students wore helmets on bicycles and motorcycles; too many males carried weapons; the rate of violence in Utah schools was too high; too many students seriously considered suicide; too many students used harmful substances; and students needed significant improvements in dietary and physical activity behaviors. Data from other sources indicated that students were engaging in high risk sexual behaviors. (SM)

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ED 434 874

Utah Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results
1991, 1993, 1995

SP038808

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Utah Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results 1991, 1993 & 1995

Sincere appreciation is expressed to the students, teachers and administrators who participated in the 1991, 1993 and 1995 Utah Youth Risk Behavior Surveys

INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of the *1995 Utah Youth Risk Behavior Survey* of high school students across the state, and makes comparisons to selected 1991 and 1993 results. The surveys were conducted by the Research and Evaluation Program at the University of Utah, and represent a cooperative effort between the survey team and the Utah State Office of Education AIDS Education Program. This report provides the basis for useful discussions about effective school health education programs among educators, youth, parents, community organizations and government agencies. For readers desiring additional information, a question-by-question summary of survey results is included in Appendix I of this report. Appendix II, a *Healthy Schools Checklist*, describes characteristics of school health policies, instruction, and other components of successful school health programs.

QUESTIONNAIRE

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey questionnaire was designed by experts nationwide through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to measure the extent to which adolescents engage in behaviors that result in the most serious health and social problems of youth and adulthood. These behaviors include unintentional and intentional injuries; tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use; sexual behaviors; dietary behaviors that cause health problems; and physical inactivity. A Utah version of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey was approved each year (1991, 1993, and 1995) for use in Utah public schools by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Office of Education's Data Acquisition Advisory Committee. The 76-question Utah survey was identical to the National YRBS with one exception -- eight questions about sexual behaviors were omitted.

METHODS

Standardized protocols for sampling schools and classrooms, administering the survey, and other survey tasks were utilized as outlined in the CDC's *Handbook for Conducting Youth Risk Behavior Surveys*. Participation in the survey was voluntary. A strict protocol was followed to protect the privacy and confidentiality of all participating students and schools.

PARTICIPANTS

In 1995, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey was administered to 3,291 students in grades 9 through 12 in 40 out of 50 randomly selected public schools in Utah during the spring of 1995. The school response rate was 80%, and the student response rate was 84%. In 1991, 4,580 students participated in all 63 randomly selected schools; in 1993, 4,420 students completed the survey in 49 of 50 randomly selected schools. Results from all three years are representative of all grade nine through 12 public school students in Utah.

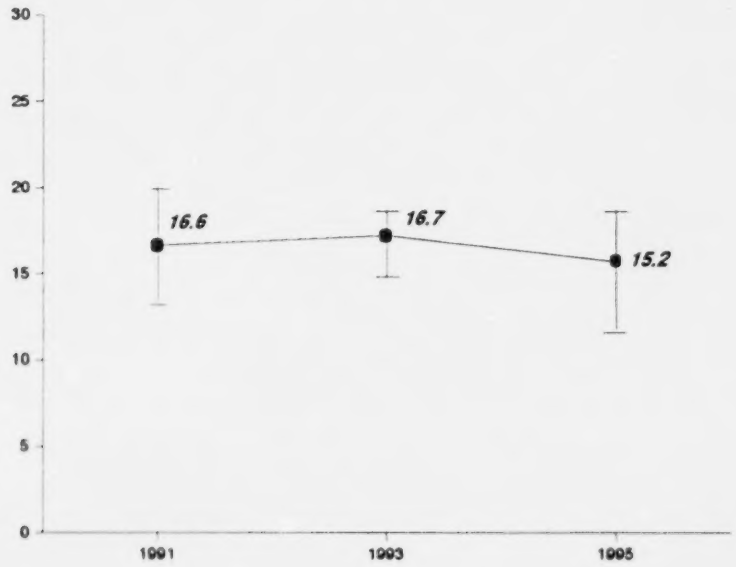
Of the 3,291 students participating in the survey, 51.4% were males; 24.8% were in the 9th grade, 30.2% were in the 10th grade, 21.5% were in the 11th grade, and 19.9% were in the 12th grade. Regarding students' ethnicity, 87% were white, 1% were black, 4% were Hispanic, and 8% were from other groups.

Unintentional & Intentional Injuries

Because injuries claim so many lives of children and adolescents, they are accountable for more potential years of life lost than the three leading causes of death in Utah combined.

Of those students completing the 1995 survey:

- 24.1% of all males and 14.4% of all females never or rarely wore a seat belt when riding in a car driven by someone else.
- 57.3% of all males and 60.3% of all females who rode a motorcycle during the past 12 months never or rarely wore a motorcycle helmet.
- 11.9% of 12th grade males and 8.6% of 12th grade females drove a car or other vehicle during the past 30 days when they had been drinking.
- 27.4% of 12th grade males and 6.6% of 12th grade females carried a weapon, such as a gun, knife or club on one or more of the past 30 days.
- 9.3% of all males and 4.8% of all females had been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property during the past 12 months.
- 41.3% of all males and 24.7% of all females were in a physical fight one or more times during the past 12 months.
- 5.1% of all males and 11.8% of all females actually attempted suicide one or more times during the past 12 months.



Percentage of Students Who Ever Seriously Considered Attempting Suicide During the Past 12 Months.

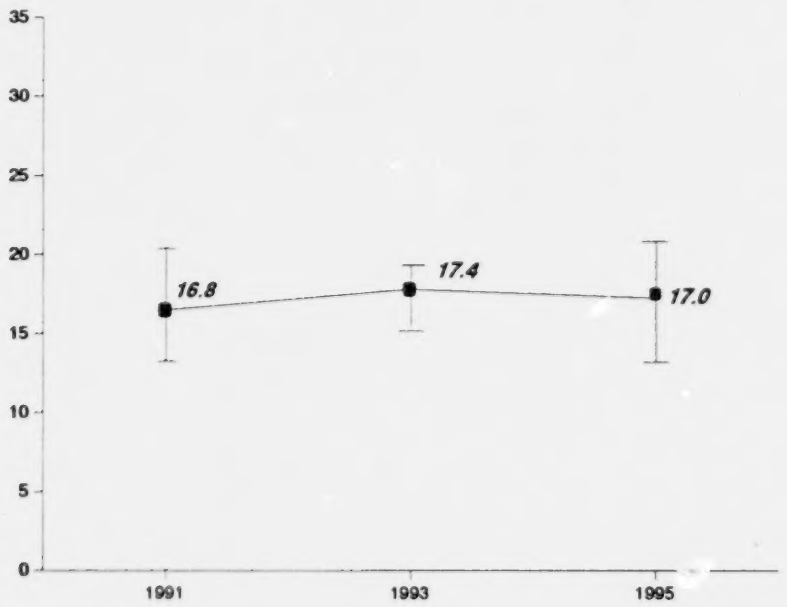
Tobacco, Alcohol, and Other Drug Use

TOBACCO USE

Tobacco use is the single most important preventable cause of death in the United States. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, over one million teenagers begin smoking each year.

Of those students completing the 1995 survey:

- 51.7% of all males and 43.7% of all females have tried cigarette smoking.
- 52.4% of 12th grade males have tried cigarette smoking, compared to 51.0% of 9th grade males.
- 47.1% of 12th grade females have tried cigarette smoking, compared to 42.1% of 9th grade females.
- 19.2 % of all males and 16.0% of all females smoked a whole cigarette for the first time before age 13.
- 16.8% of 12th grade males and 17.3% of 12th grade females have smoked cigarettes on one or more of the past 30 days
- 13.0% of 12th grade males and 11.3% of 9th grade males used chewing tobacco or snuff on one or more of the past thirty days.



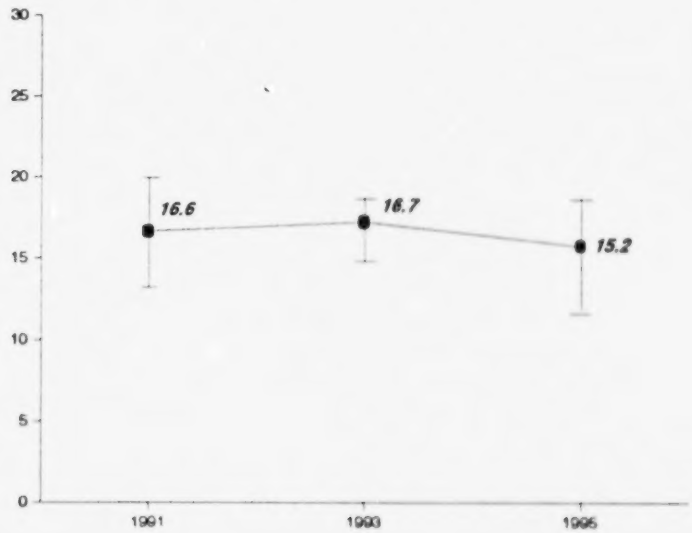
Percentage of Students Who Smoked Cigarettes on One or More of the Past 30 Days

ALCOHOL USE

Alcohol is the major factor in approximately half of all homicides, suicides, and motor vehicle crashes, which the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has declared as the leading causes of death and disability among young people.

Of those students completing the 1995 survey:

- 44.8% of all males and 42.4% of all females have tried at least one drink of alcohol during their life.
- 48.8% of 12th grade males have tried drinking alcohol, compared to 37.2% of 9th grade males.
- 46.4% of 12th grade females have tried drinking alcohol, compared to 36.3% of 9th grade females.
- 23.5 % of all males and 18.0% of all females had their first drink of alcohol other than a few sips before age 13.
- 24.6% of 12th grade males and 22.4% of 12th grade females had at least one drink of alcohol on one or more of the past 30 days.
- 18.2% of 12th grade males and 12.6% of 9th grade males had five or more drinks of alcohol in a row on one or more of the past 30 days.
- 14.7% of 12th grade females and 14.1% of 9th grade females had five or more drinks of alcohol in a row on one or more of the past 30 days.



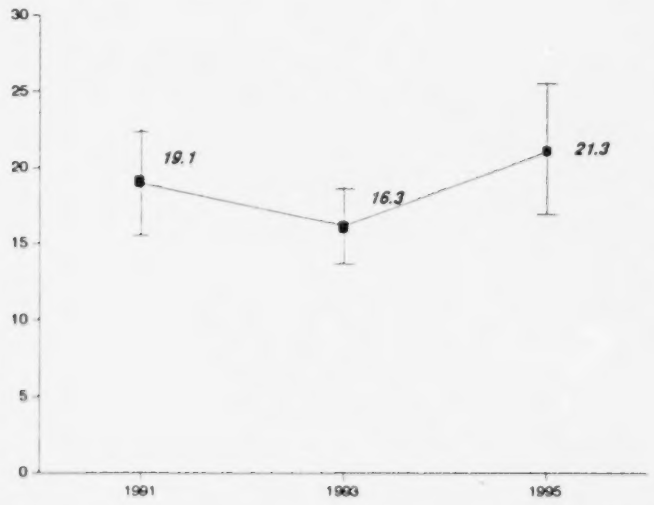
Percentage of Students Who Had 5 or More Drinks of Alcohol in a Row on One or More of the Past 30 Days

OTHER DRUG USE

It has been estimated that one in four adolescents in the U.S. is at very high risk for the consequences of alcohol and other drug problems. Illicit drug use is greater among high school students and other young adults in American than in any other industrialized nation in the world.

Of those students completing the 1995 survey:

- 22.3% of all males and 20.3% of all females have used marijuana during their life.
- 12.7% of all males and 11.6% of all females used marijuana one or more times during the past 30 days.
- 2.9% of 12th grade males and 7.3% of 9th grade males tried marijuana for the first time before age 13.
- 3.3% of all males and 2.9% of all females used any form of cocaine, including powder, crack, or freebase one or more times during the past 30 days.
- 18.9% of all males and 17.6% of all females sniffed glue, breathed the contents of aerosol spray cans, or inhaled any paint or spray to get high during their life.
- 12.0% of all males and 11.3% of all females have used any type of illegal drug, such as LSD, PCP, ecstasy, mushrooms, speed, ice, or heroin one or more times during their life.
- 2.4% of all males and 1.4% of all females have used a needle to inject any illegal drug into their body one or more times during their life.
- 30.2% of all males and 21.9% of all females have had someone offer, sell, or give them an illegal drug on school property during the past 12 months.



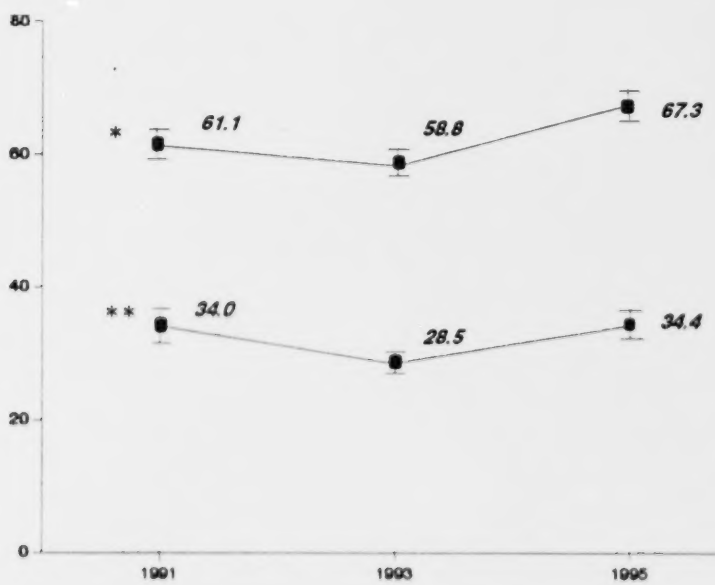
Percentage of Students Who Have Used Marijuana One or More Times During Their Life

Dietary Behaviors

Obesity in the United States appears to be increasing among adolescents. Because lifetime dietary patterns are established during youth, adolescents are encouraged to choose nutritious foods and to develop healthy eating habits.

Of those students completing the 1995 survey:

- 67.6% of all males and 62.7% of all females ate fruit one or more times yesterday.
- 54.6% of all males and 46.0% of all females ate cooked vegetables one or more times yesterday.
- 35.4% of all males and 33.4% of all females ate green salad one or more times yesterday.
- 53.8% of all males and 33.7% of all females ate hamburger, hot dogs, or sausage one or more times yesterday.
- 59.4% of all males and 43.6% of all females ate french fries or potato chips one or more times yesterday.
- 71.8% of all males and 62.8% of all females ate cookies, doughnuts, pie, or cake one or more times yesterday.
- 18.4% of all males and 60.4% of all females were trying to lose weight.



* Percentage of Students Who Ate Cookies, Doughnuts, Pie, or Cake One or More Times Yesterday

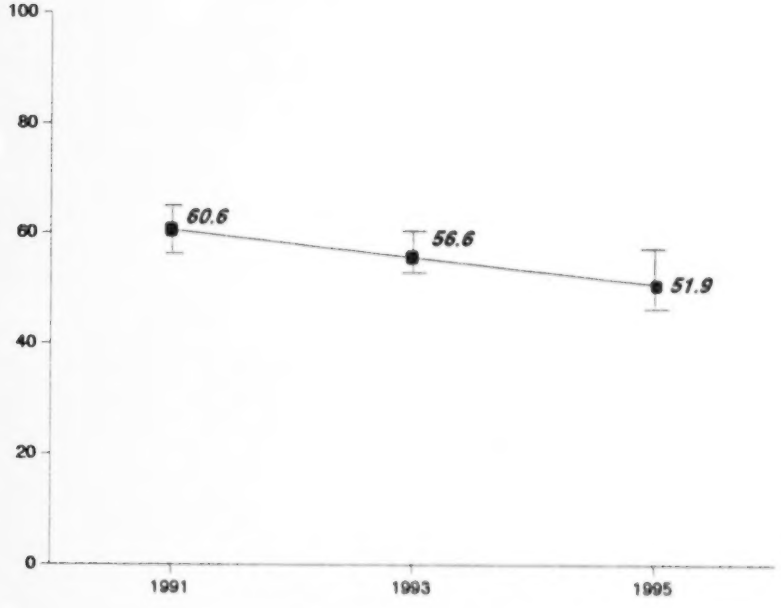
** Percentage of Students Who Ate Green Salad One or More Times Yesterday

Physical Activity

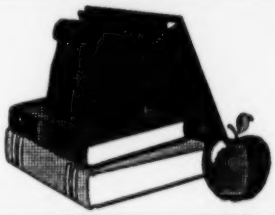
The U.S. Department of Education states that the quantity and quality of school physical education programs can have a significant positive effect on the health-related fitness of children. It is also claimed that regular physical activity increases life expectancy.

Of those students completing the 1995 survey:

- 76.4% of all males and 59.3% of all females regularly exercised or participated in vigorous sports activities during three or more of the past 7 days.
- 57.3% of all males and 46.5% of all females attended physical education class one or more days during an average school week.



Percent of students who attended physical education (PE) class one or more days in an average school week.



Conclusions

Results from each year (1991, 1993 and 1995) of the *Utah Youth Risk Behavior Survey* indicate that by the time youth in Utah enter the 9th grade, many have engaged in behaviors that put them at risk for the significant health and social problems of youth and adulthood. Results also indicate that many students in Utah continue to engage in health risk behaviors throughout their high school years.

*NOTE: Readers may have noticed when examining the graphs in this report that the percentage of students who reported engaging in any one of the risk behaviors **appears** to have changed slightly from year to year. Although it may appear to be so, based on percentage changes, readers are cautioned against drawing conclusions as to increasing or decreasing trends in health risk behaviors among high school students in Utah. For example, in the graph on page 7, it appears from the percentages reported for 1991 and 1995 that there has been a significant decrease in the percentage of students attending physical education class at least once a week. However, because the 95% confidence intervals for these two time periods vertically overlap, however slightly, it cannot be said that a smaller percentage of students attended physical education class in 1995 when compared to students in 1991. Thus, readers are **cautioned** against drawing firm conclusions about trends over time from these results.*

In general, with some exceptions, survey results indicate that there are few statistically significant increases or decreases from year to year in the percentages of high school students engaging in health risk behaviors in Utah. What results ***do*** indicate is that youth in Utah continue to engage in behaviors that can have serious personal, financial, and social consequences:

- Too few Utah students wear seat belts when riding in a car or helmets when riding on motorcycles or bicycles.
- Too many males carry guns or other weapons, and the rate of violence in Utah schools is too high.
- Too many students, especially females, seriously consider attempting suicide.
- Although fewer students report using tobacco, alcohol, or other drugs when compared to students in several of the states surrounding Utah, too many students in Utah are using harmful substances.
- Data from other sources indicate that Utah students are engaging in sexual behaviors that put them at risk for HIV infection, other sexually transmitted diseases, and unintended pregnancy.
- Utah students could make significant improvements in their dietary behaviors and levels of physical activity.

These behaviors and their consequences can be prevented by teaching youth ***how*** to adopt and maintain healthy behaviors. While this teaching begins at home, schools can reinforce the concepts learned at home and provide repeated opportunities for children to practice healthy behaviors in a broader social context. Successful school health programs incorporate appropriate policies, classroom instruction, staff development, and parent and community involvement. Students, parents, educators, and communities can use the checklist on the following page to become familiar with key components of successful programs, rate their school's program, and participate meaningfully in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of school health education program enhancements.